



The University of Texas Charter School System

District Newsletter

Teaching to the Spirit of Every Child

January 17, 2020

Volume 5, Issue 2

Superintendents Corner

Happy New Year Everyone!

A new year always brings a sense of renewal. I hope the start of this new decade brings with it inspiration to continue to your goals.

The UT Charter School System, even though we are two distinct districts, we always look for ways to collaborate whenever possible to provide the best educational services to all of the students we serve. Starting this fall, we have a unique opportunity for UTES and the UTCS to co-locate next school year.

Since 2009, UTCS has provided the educational services for children in the care of Helping Hand Home (HHH) for Children. HHH is a small, nurturing and therapeutic home for children (grades K – 6) in the foster care system who are healing from abuse, neglect or abandonment. UTCS teachers are on the HHH campus every day to support their students' academic success. And HHH students have a field trip to the UT Elementary campus every Friday for story time in the library, check out books and as a special treat, they eat pizza from the UTES cafeteria.



At the conclusion of the spring semester, HHH will break ground for a new school building on their campus in North Austin. The project is expected to take about a year, so while their new school is under construction, HHH students will be educated at the UTES campus. This summer, two portables will be moved to the UTES campus specifically for the HHH students. The 25 elementary school students from HHH will have their own self-contained classrooms, their own teachers and Holly Engleman is their principal.

Following the successful completion of their new building, HHH students will return to their campus and their new school in time to begin the 2021-22 school year.

We are excited as a System to be able to bring together our Districts in this way, to be able to share our resources and provide uninterrupted education for the children we serve and offer them the pride that comes with being a student of the University of Texas Charter School System.

Hook 'em Lil' Horns!

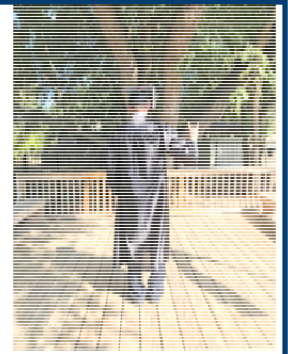
Melissa M. Chavez, Ph.D.

Associate Vice President and Superintendent of the University of Texas Charter School System

Congratulations to our Fall 2019 Graduates

The UT Charter School System is proud to announce the fall 2019 graduation of **15 high school students!** We know that many of our students have overcome enormous barriers to complete this phase of their education and words cannot express how proud we are of each and every one.

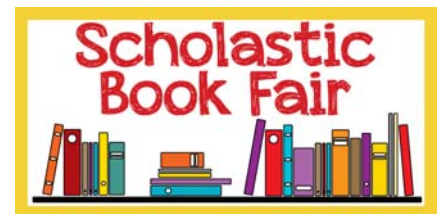
We sincerely applaud every graduate and we wish them all the best in their academic and professional pursuits.



The Benefit of Book Fairs

Some of you may have read our November story about Helping Hand Home students Friday field trips to visit Ms. Evans and the UT Elementary School Library. (If you haven't seen the story, you may find it here: <https://utelementary.org/2019/11/04/utes-library-news/>) In addition to HHH visits, students from the Texas NeuroRehab Center (TNC) also get a chance to visit the library and take home a special gift.

TNC, located in South Austin, is a residential medical facility that serves children with brain injury, neuro-behavioral issues and/or who are considered medically fragile. In addition to dealing with medical issues, many of the TNC students are in the foster care system.



Twice a year, the UTES school library hosts Scholastic Book Fairs where families have an opportunity to purchase books for their home libraries or from the teachers classroom wish lists. Ms. Evans earns points from book sales during the book fair which she can use to purchase books from Scholastic. The librarian saves her points to be able to purchase new books for students, including students from TNC.

Every fall, the students from TNC have a special field trip to the UT Elementary campus. They have an SEL related lesson and activity, eat lunch at the UTES cafeteria and at the end, each student gets to choose a book for themselves. They spend a little time reading their new books in the comfortable surroundings of the library.

The next book fair will be the week of March 2. Stop by if you are in Austin!

School Spotlight



The newest campus of the University Charter School enrolled its first students this January. Safe Haven Youth Ranch has been a dream in the making. Safe Haven Community Services Executive Director Eric Fields came to Dr. Chavez three years ago with his dream to build a ranch for hard-to-place adolescent boys in the foster care system.

The Ranch, located in Hempstead, combines evidence-based trauma treatment interventions, 4-H youth development programs and individualized behavior skills training to serve the youth in their care. Their campus construction was just completed in the fall so our UTCS has a brand-new facility to teach in.

Thank you Principal Goodman and Mr. Clark for all of your hard work getting this new campus going!



Bringing the UTES School Gardens Back

During the recent capital improvement projects at the UT Elementary School campus, all of the soil from the property had to be removed and replaced because of possible contamination as the property was previously a railroad stockyard. Because of the remediation, all of the above-ground, container gardens that had been on the campus were removed and we have not had the funding to replace them.

Starting in September 2019, UTES designated the space for the new gardens and assigned a team to plan and fundraise for a new one. The plan is to use the former playground at the UTES main entrance as an outdoor classroom. This will welcome visitors with the beauty of the gardens, give the plants a safe place to grow and offer our students a unique place to learn.

The first fundraiser will be a “Hornraiser” UT’s online giving platform, similar to “GoFundMe.” The fundraiser will be active February 5 through March 6. Stay tuned for more information!



January is
National
Mentoring
Month

January is National Mentoring Month!

The University of Texas Charter School System is grateful for all of the mentors who share their experience and offer encouragement to the students and teachers of our districts.

Important Dates

January 20	MLK Holiday (UTES and All Tracks)
January 21	UTES Management Board Meeting
January 22	UT-UCS Advisory Board Meeting
February 10-14	Intersession (Track 3 only)
February 14	Staff Development (UTES Only)
February 17	Parent Teacher Conferences (UTES Only)
	Staff Development Waiver Day (All Tracks)
March 6	No Students—Teacher Work Day (Tracks 2 and 4)
March 9-13	Spring Break (Tracks 2 and 4)
March 13	No Students—Teacher Work Day (UTES and Tracks 1 and 3)
March 16-20	Spring Break (UTES and Tracks 1 and 3)